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SUBJECT: MINAWI PROPOSES U.S.-NCP DIALOGUE, DISCUSSES  
DARFUR STATE POLITICS

REF: KHARTOUM 00832

Classified By: CDA A. Fernandez, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

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Summary  
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¶1. (S/NF) Reporting on recent conversations with two senior National Congress Party (NCP) figures, Senior Assistant to the President and Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) leader Minni Minawi has renewed a previous proposal to facilitate a regular dialogue between the CDA and the NCP on the Darfur conflict. In a July 11 meeting with Poloff, he also offered insights into political developments in the Darfur states, including the replacement of the South Darfur governor and the shift of the West Darfur governor's allegiance away from the NCP. He proffered mild criticism of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement's (SPLM) lack of effective outreach to other political elements in Sudan, including the SLM, and questioned the SPLM's efforts to work with Darfur civil society groups as part of the UN/AU political process. Minawi proposed a meeting of Darfur stakeholders in the near future to address security, humanitarian, and political issues at the beginning of the tenure of the new UN/AU special representative and force commander. End summary.

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Renewed Proposal for U.S.-NCP Dialogue  
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¶2. (S/NF) According to Senior Assistant to the President and SLM leader Minni Minawi, two influential NCP figures have suggested more direct dialogue with CDA Fernandez to defuse the Darfur conflict and ease U.S.-Sudan bilateral relations. Speaking with Poloff on July 11, Minawi reported that in separate conversations with Director General of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) Salah Ghosh and Presidential Advisor Mustafa Osman Ismail they had suggested that they, Minawi, and the CDA begin regular conversations on core issues important to both governments. It is unclear whether the initiative for this dialogue came from Minawi or from the NCP officials.

¶3. (S/NF) Minawi said that the first step to the discussion should be a "single plan" for the dialogue. He intimated that Ghosh had raised the idea without consultation with other members of the NCP. Minawi deemed Ghosh the "strongest guy" in the Government at present. He had built "his own structure" that operated outside the influence of other NCP officials. "Bashir and Vice President Ali Osman Taha both fear him," said Minawi. "If he makes a decision, they

follow." He recounted a remark during a recent Council of Ministers meeting that none of the "real decision-makers in the Government are in this room," a specific reference to Ghosh. "There are others (i.e. influential officials), but he's the number one guy," Minawi added. When pressed by Poloff, Minawi confirmed "Bashir would accept" any agreement Ghosh made with the U.S. (Note: Per reftel, Minawi has made similar comments to Embassy officials in the recent past while offering to facilitate dialogue between the USG and the NCP. End note.)

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Darfur State Politics  
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14. (C) Minawi welcomed the recent appointment of Ali Mahmoud to replace Al Hajj Attal Manan as governor of South Darfur State. He characterized Mahmoud as "more realistic" and practical in his approach to politics than either Manan or North Darfur State Governor Yousef Kibir. "As a Darfurian, he won't divide people," said Minawi, noting that Mahmoud's Taisha tribe has not been associated with the Arab militias which have perpetrated violence against the African tribes of Darfur. (Note: Minawi reported that Ghosh had recently suggested that Manan could replace the late Maghzoub Al-Khalifa as the Darfur czar for the NCP, which Minawi rejected. In a separate discussion with Minawi, Bashir claimed he would handle the Darfur portfolio personally, although Manan's name keeps coming up among regime sources. End note.)

15. (C) West Darfur State Governor Abdulgasseem Imam had had a change of heart in recent months, according to Minawi. Imam had distanced himself from the NCP and now voiced support for

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the UN/AU hybrid peace-keeping force and disarmament of the Janjaweed. He opposed any return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the camps until stability increased and development projects could begin. Minawi further reported that Imam had fired the ineffective NCP minister of finance in West Darfur. He had also refused to accompany hard-line Presidential Advisor Nafie Alie Nafie on a trip to Kulbus--and told other NCP ministers from West Darfur that "if they go, there was no reason" to come back to El Geneina. "I'm talking to him daily," said Minawi, "and drawing him away from the NCP."

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Mild Criticism of SPLM  
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16. (C) Minawi mildly criticized the SPLM for a lack of effective outreach to other political elements in Sudan, including the SLM. Minawi's brother had been appointed the official SLM liaison with the SPLM several months ago but had not yet been able to meet a senior SPLM official. Minawi confident Ali Trayo said that the SPLM feared angering rival SLM leader Abdulwahid Al-Nur, a traditional ally of the SPLM, if it worked too closely with the SLM/Minawi. Minawi stated, however, that the SPLM was reticent to coordinate too closely with the SLM because of a potential backlash from the NCP.

17. (C) Regarding the SPLM's initiative on Darfur, Minawi questioned the proposed civil society component in the SPLM's planned conference. "Why civil society? Civil society is not opposed to the government," he commented. Minawi asserted that security was the principle problem in Darfur. All political initiatives should focus on five to six key rebel political leaders and the field commanders because "only they can chance the security situation" by signing a peace agreement. "The DDDC (Darfur Darfur Dialogue and Consultation) in the DPA is for civil society," explained Minawi. He had raised these concerns with Government of Southern Sudan Minister of Presidential Affairs Luka Biong Deng, who had welcomed the SLM's advice on the "effective

people on the ground." Biong had also said that First Vice President Salva Kiir would travel to Darfur in July to lay the groundwork for the SPLM conference. (Note: In a brief exchange with Poloff on July 12, Trayo said that Kiir would travel to Darfur after his return from China and would meet Minawi in El Fasher. End note).

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Proposed SLM conference  
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18. (C) In recent meetings with UN/AU Joint Special Representative Rudolphe Adada and Force Commander Martin Luther Agwai, Minawi proposed a conference in Darfur of DPA "stakeholders," including the SLM (political leadership and field commanders), the NCP, humanitarian organizations, and the international guarantors of the agreement. The aim would be to discuss impediments to the political process and could culminate in a communique or action plan for increasing security, empowering the SLM politically, and facilitating humanitarian operations. According to Minawi, both Adada and Agwai were receptive to the proposal. Given that contentious issues would be discussed, Minawi suggested that a neutral party, such as the UN, should serve as a moderator for the conference. He hoped that the conference could be held in the near future and would help to establish a good rapport between the SLM, Adada, and Agwai at the beginning of their tenure.

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Comment  
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19. (C) Minawi's offer to mediate between senior NCP officials and the U.S. is a hardy perennial of Sudanese politics. Sudanese officials often misunderstand that the problem in U.S.-Sudan relations is policies not personalities. End comment.  
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